



For Immediate Release

World-Renowned Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry Moving to Storrs Center

April 22, 2013 – (Mansfield, Connecticut) The Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry, part of the University of Connecticut's world-renowned puppet programs in the School of Fine Arts, will become part of Storrs Center in the fall.

The museum will relocate from its current location at UConn's Depot campus to a more accessible exhibition and performance space that is part of the new branch of the UConn Co-op at Storrs Center.

"Our move to Storrs Center is a great opportunity for the Ballard Institute to thrive in the middle of a busy community environment," says John Bell, Director of the museum and a theater historian. "We are looking forward to expanding our hours of operation, presenting more puppet performances, forums, film showings, and symposia, and collaborating with other parts of the UConn and Mansfield community."

In its new home, the Ballard Institute and Museum will occupy 4,332 square-feet of museum, performance, and support space on the first floor of the building, providing for an expanded space for one large exhibition or two smaller simultaneous exhibitions.

"We are very excited about the move," says Cynthia van Zelm, Executive Director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership, Inc. "We feel it will be a destination for visitors with a key location inside the UConn Co-op and near restaurants and other businesses in the downtown."

The Museum's permanent collection includes 2,500 puppets consisting of a wide variety of marionettes, hand puppets, shadow fingers, rod puppets, toy theaters, and other figures, as well as hundreds of traditional puppets from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. It also includes hundreds of books and more than 1,000 videos and other audio-visual resources.

William Simpson, President and Chief Operating Officer of the UConn Co-op, says working with the Museum in its new Storrs Center location will create an innovative experience for the UConn Co-op and its patrons.

"This will offer the bookstore customer/museum patron a unique environment that they will want to experience again and again. We can't wait," says Simpson.

Current exhibitions at the Museum at the Depot campus include “Exceptional and Uncommon: The Puppetry of Dick Myers,” the first-ever exhibition devoted to the unique puppetry of Dick Myers, whose one-man shows excited audiences around the world in the mid-20th century; and “Strings, Rods, and Robots: Recent Acquisitions,” which showcases the exhilarating diversity of puppets from around the world recently acquired by the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry.

UConn is one of only two universities in the country offering a bachelor’s of fine arts in puppet arts and the only one offering master’s degrees in puppet arts. Graduates of the program perform and design for many theatres around the world. Shortly before her death earlier this month, Jane Henson, a puppeteer and original collaborator with Muppets creator Jim Henson, donated \$100,000 to establish a scholarship fund for students majoring in puppet arts.

Storrs Center is a new mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented downtown in Mansfield, Connecticut. The downtown features shops, restaurants, services, and apartment homes that are interspersed with a town square and public areas in a new neighborhood located at the intersection of Storrs Road and the University of Connecticut.

For more information about Storrs Center, visit www.storrscenter.com.